

JANUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER

A WORD FROM THE PASTOR

2007 is now past, but I am not quite ready to say goodbye to a year that turned in so many memorable performances. We held on to a pesky deficit that came with last year's winter weather right up until the very last weekend of the year, and then we decisively retired all hints of any unmet deficits in 2007. We experienced a very generous December, and drew even with expenses, with more than a little left over to begin 2008 with a healthy surplus! The details are yet to come, but all reports concur: 2007 was a very good year for Zion, financially speaking. We met our operating expenses, exceeded expectations for our Sanctuary Renovation program, enjoyed an exceptional commitment to benevolence, and even made a down payment on next year's anticipation of the kitchen renovation program, which is to say that we bought a new refrigerator because the old refrigerator broke down and could no longer be repaired.

Anyway, here we are in 2008 with great Christmas cheer to lift our spirits as we look forward to a whole new set of challenges awaiting our prayerful attention and faithful resolve. Again, I've got to admit that I'm not yet ready to focus on the challenges promised with the arrival of 2008. I still have Lucy on my mind, and her *Peanuts*-character counsel – *life is like a deck chair on a cruise ship*. "Charlie Brown," she opined, "passengers open up these canvas deck chairs so they can sit in the sun. Some people place their chairs facing the rear of the ship so they can see where they've been. Other people face their chairs forward – they want to see where they're going." My deck chair is still facing toward 2007. I want to admire where we've been for just a little while longer. I want to breathe in the sense of accomplishment, and exhale with relief. There is a long list of checkmarks alongside the tasks we accomplished and the goals we met: the Advent Giving Tree, our Turkey-Give-away, the Youth Missions Craft Show, a wonderful Christmas Eve, Sunday Evening Advent blizzard, our ecumenical evening with St. Paul's. The daunting challenges that forced our worry and concern are fading fast into the past with 2007.

So, what is it that we have to look forward to and worry about as 2008 arrives? Winter has arrived, and while *ole man winter* was mild in December, it looks like he's changed his tune and his temperature with the arrival of January. The Boiler Task Force is working on a report that ought to lay out quite a challenge for us as we look ahead to a heating (and cooling) system that will serve our church for the next fifty years! The operating budget has some increases in it that will tax our giving in 2008. I think it's time to have another 2006, when thirty-four newcomers loved what they saw and joined in the mission of our congregational family. Let's hope that God blesses us with the opportunities to thrive in our desire to invite friends and neighbors to join us as we grow in love and service by grace. We can't guarantee the results, but we can commit ourselves to offering our best when it comes to trusting God's grace, living Christ's love, and following the Spirit's lead.

As I turn my deck chair from looking back to facing forward, I know that I've got a lot of folks to thank for the unbelievable accomplishments that have graced our life together over the course of the past year, and as you make your way through this edition of *The Zion Herald*, I am sure you will see many places where I am talking about you and your faithfulness as I express my gratitude for a wonderful year. So, without further adieu, allow me to say thank you. Thank you for a year to remember, and thank you for your support for the life and mission of our church.

AN OVERVIEW OF BENEVOLENCE FOR 2007

Zion takes great pride in supporting the work of the wider church. All of the money that is given to Zion is used to support the work of God's kingdom as best we can envision it and organize ourselves to do it. We are very conscientious in our desire to be faithful stewards with all that money that our members and friends share with us. That goes for what we spend to support our ministry here at Zion and for what we give to support the ministry of others.

Our primary commitment to the work of the wider church comes through the support we give to the Synod. We gave \$18,500 to the *Northeastern Ohio Synod* in 2007. Our Synod keeps about 50% for local efforts here in Ohio, and sends the other 50% to the *ELCA*, which extends the reach of the church across the nation and around the world. The ministries we help through this support are far more than we can name, but it includes mission outposts like St. James in East Cleveland, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries in Ohio, Lutheran Social Services in our area and around the state, just to name a few of the ministries we are fond of helping. We also contribute an additional \$3,600 to the *ELCA Global Missions*, through which we support the Schmalzle family and their missionary work in Kenya. Through the Women of Zion, we helped to contribute to the Women of the ELCA, and additional monies and supplies to *Lutheran World Relief*. Our major commitment here at home to assist in helping to respond to needs beyond our own is focused on Zion's *Food Pantry and Clothing Closet*. You can also include such efforts as our annual *Turkey Give-Away* and the *Advent Giving Tree*, which provides gifts for children and food for families during the Christmas season. These commitments elicited giving in excess of \$6,000 this year. Locally, we also raised \$372 for the *Keegan O'Reilly Fund* through this year's Vacation Bible School. With the help of the Youth of Zion, the Men of Zion, and Lutheran Men in Mission, we contributed \$2,400 to the *Adullam Christian Fellowship* in our desire to *Help New Orleans Heal*. Our efforts to support the Youth of Zion also included a \$500 contribution to the *Lutheran College Fund*, along with investing over \$3,170 in this year's Youth Mission Trip to New Orleans.

When the year began, Zion established as our benevolence target the goal of giving 15% of our offering income to ministries other than our own operating expenses. That amount, based on our best estimates, should have been \$27,645. That's what we approved with the 2007 budget. Instead, our commitment to benevolence was well in excess \$36,000. This is an amount that is far greater than even the 15% we regard as our fair share of the work of the wider church. For that we are both proud and grateful. You should know that we try very hard to make sure that our generosity with benevolence does not leave us with a deficit here at home with our own operating budget. In the end, it is only your generosity that allows us to do that. In the end, it is only your generosity that allows us to do anything. For that, and so much more, we offer our thanks to God, and, of course, to you.

Church Council News

Our meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m., since almost half of our Council was already on-hand enjoying the delicious Christmas dinner hosted by the Chancel Guild in Luther Hall. So, in addition to Carol Rossbach, Betty Tracy, Tina Beaber, Mary Humbert, Steve Ross, and Pastor Sherwindt, Jayne Schrader, Dave Palumbo, Bob Lancashire, Chris Thomas, and Mark Votaw were present. The better part of our meeting was focused on explaining and authorizing the purchase of our new refrigerator, a \$3,000 down payment on our plans to renovate the kitchen, once we are through, for the time being, with our present focus on the Sanctuary. Try as we might, there were simply too many leaks in the system to make further repair possible.

The remainder of our meeting was spent focusing on a very busy and challenging December. The Sunday Evening Advent Services were already under way, and our desire to draw even with expenses would require all the generosity we could muster. Income and expenses for November offered every reason to remain hopeful that our church family was up for the challenge.

ZION'S NOVEMBER FINANCIAL FACTS

November Income \$18,221.66

November Expenses \$18,578.48

November (Deficit) (\$ 356.82)

Income thru November \$210,166.07

Expenses " November \$214,002.34

Deficit thru November (\$ 3,836.27)

Our 2007 YTD (Deficit) (\$ 3,479.45)

The 2006 YTD (Deficit) (\$ 3,027.96)

We thank you for your generous support!

More Renovation News

Could Zion's Sanctuary have looked any more beautiful than it did than on Christmas Eve this year? The wreaths hanging above the poinsettia trees, positioned prominently on the front wall, framing the cross with its striking stained glass! The colors red and green continued along the west wall, with poinsettias in the window wells, and new liturgical drawings were added to the east wall to complement the colors of our recently painted window wells. With Christmas trees in the Chancel and the Narthex, a new and effective sound system, and surrounded by the colors of the season, it was quite and experience worshipping with us on Christmas Eve and throughout the season of Advent.

We extend our thanks to the many persons who had a hand in preparing our Sanctuary for the season. First of all, we thank all of the members who purchased poinsettias for Christmas, which numbered in excess of seventy. We also extend our thanks to our resident artist, Carol Rossbach, and her willing and able helpers, Mabel Kolarik and Betty Tracy. The liturgical drawings are colorful, beautiful, and striking. We also thank the team that worked on some of the logistics and support. That would be Brian Walters, Chris Thomas, Gary Horton, Edna Smith, Darlene Milavickas, Mark Votaw, John Long, and Bob Lancashire.

Of course, it wasn't just our setting that made the difference on Christmas Eve. The worship we brought, the praise we offered: these, too, added to the powerful experience of God's presence among us during this holy season. Musicians and vocalists, young and old, those on staff and our many volunteers, together with members and their families: it was all of this, and so much more. ***Thanks be to God!***

WORSHIP NEWS UPDATE

All of us who serve on the Worship Ministry were pleased – beyond pleased – with the results of our experiment with a return to two Christmas Eve Services, rather than sticking with our decade-long practice of scheduling three services. We offered our Traditional Candle-Light Service with Holy Communion at 8:30 p.m., beginning with our half-hour concert of special music at 8:00 p.m. The special music was exceptional, the Sanctuary full, and our worship uplifting and inspiring. Our earlier service at 6:00 p.m. was also very well attended, offering special music during the service, a visit from Charlie Brown, and our Carol Setting for Holy Communion. Both services were strengthened by the change. We discovered that in offering three services, our members generally looked at things as two-fifths empty rather than three-fifths full.

Sometimes, it's not as much about the facts as about perspective; and this year, Christmas Eve worship was full, full, full. It was a nice reminder of how healthy we've become as a congregation entering into our one-hundred-and-ninety-fifth year of growing in love and service by grace. Christmas Eve left our members and friends looking forward to what God has in store for us as we look ahead to 2008 and beyond. Good things are going on here at Zion. It could be that creating the right mix of programs to highlight our strengths requires that we rethink what we're doing and how we're doing it. Perhaps it is time to take a look at our weekend worship schedule. We've had a hard time getting all three services to grow simultaneously. In fact, we've had a hard time getting two of our services to grow at all. Do we have too many services for the worshipers we serve? Our success with the Christmas Eve schedule invites us to consider these questions.

SUNDAY EVENING SERVICES

Our Sunday Evening Advent Services gave our evening option for worship a huge boost through December. We enjoyed great food and great attendance. We got off to a great start with the Chancel Guild hosting our first Advent dinner, and the Zion's Youth participating with the Chrismon service.

We visited St. Paul's the next Sunday, for a wonderful evening of delicious food and outstanding music. Our *Praise Team*, their *Instruments of Christ*, together with Pastor Sherwindt's remarks on *Christian Service—Lutheran Style* and Father Clarke's brief homily made for a beautiful ecumenical event, which was enjoyed by all.

We were just a telephone call away from canceling our service on the Third Sunday of Advent, with a blizzard blowing through right about the time we were preparing for dinner. We had some faith, went ahead with our plans, and were blown away when over 100 members and friends showed up on a cold, wintry night, with the snow falling and the wind blowing! The Men of Zion prepared a delicious ham dinner, and then hammed it up during the service with a powerful rendition of *Go Tell It on the Mountain!*

Finally, the Youth of Zion, their parents, and our youth leaders served as hosts for our fourth Sunday Evening Advent Service. Attendance, once again, was outstanding, as was the food. Carole Singer then led us on a journey of singing *Carols from around the World*. It was a great evening and a great season. Average attendance for these four Sunday evenings in Advent exceeded one hundred! The services displayed variety in style and a depth of talent here at Zion. As our Sunday evening services continue, we look forward to building on these strengths.

GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sunday, January 13th: Sunday School Choir Group 1 (Pre-K to 1st) sings at 10:30 a.m. Service

Sunday, February 3rd: Sunday School Choir Group 2 (2nd thru 6th) sings at 10:30 a.m. Service

Sunday, February 10: Our Children's Easter Program Practice begins during Sunday School

Palm Sunday, March 16: Our Children's Easter Program during the 10:30 a.m. Service (only)

PRE-K THROUGH THE SIXTH GRADE

We are now back to our normal Sunday School schedule for the month of January! The Children's Choirs will practice through January at 9:10 a.m. for Group 1 (Pre-K thru 1st grade) and 9:20 a.m. for Group 2 (2nd thru 6th grade). Sunday School then follows from 9:30 a.m. to 10:20 a.m. We will follow this schedule through Sunday, February 3rd. On Sunday, February 10th, we will begin practicing for the Children's Easter Program during Sunday School. Yes, with Easter being so early this year, we are already looking ahead and preparing for it! The month of December will be devoted to Play Practice and the Christmas Story.

THANKS FOR THE ROAD TO CHRISTMAS

What a wonderful trip we enjoyed with Zion's Sunday School children as they travelled *The Road to Christmas* this year! It was such an amazing journey, beginning with the prophets foretelling of the birth of our Savior, and ending with their telling us how the spirit of Jesus lives through us in our daily lives of worship and service. **Thank you** to the children for all of their hard work and for doing a terrific job! We are so proud of them and truly enjoy watching them over the years! **Thank you** to

the parents for sharing your children and for your flexibility and dedication. We are so blessed (and grateful) to have such a great group of children!

We would also like to thank everyone who helped make this year's Christmas Program such a great success! **Thank you** to Suzanne Walters for directing and leading the music, and to Brian Walters for helping with the sound system. **Thank you** to Tina Beaber, Vicki Givler, Mary Humbert, Connie Riffle, Melissa Riffle, Janet Slease, and Courlene Coulter for your help and support wherever needed – during practices, during the program and with our Christmas party. **Thank you** to Mary Humbert and Carol Rossbach for all your help with the props. Everyone's time, dedication and commitment to our kids is so greatly appreciated! **Thank you! Thank you! Thank you** to everyone involved!

MORE GREAT NEWS FOR ZION'S YOUTH

THANK YOU TO OUR YOUTH FOR A GREAT DECEMBER

December was a very busy month for Zion's Youth, and there are many **THANK YOU's** to share! First, *thank you* to everyone who supported the *Advent Giving Tree* this year. It was once again an amazing success! Not only were we able to collect gifts for several of the families we serve through our Food Pantry, but we were able to collect \$25 for each of the forty-five families to ensure they would have a Christmas meal! In fact, ten additional families were added to the list as the distribution date arrived. That is truly a picture of what the Christmas season is about – sharing God's love and helping others in need! **Thank you** to everyone for making such a wonderful difference!

A big **thank you** also goes out to Brooke Roman for putting up our Giving Tree this year and for helping to hang the tags; and while we're thinking about it, **thank you** to everyone who shared their *links of thanksgiving* that helped to decorated the tree! One by one, our tags turned into gifts. By the time Saturday, December 15th, arrived, we were looking at a huge project. So, we must thank our youth (of all ages) and our adult leaders who helped to wrap all of the Giving Tree gifts. This was an enormous undertaking, and everyone who helped pitched in with great enthusiasm! We also extend a big **thank you** to everyone who baked cookies and donated them for the pantry families, and thanks to the older youth for separating the cookies that Zion's members donated, and turning them into gift packs. Between our rehearsal for the Christmas program, the pizza party, and all sorts of goofing around, we had a great afternoon of fun and service on Saturday, December 15th!

Finally, **thank you** to all of the youth who helped with the *Chrismon Service* on the First Sunday Evening Service in Advent, and **thank you** to everyone who helped with the *Charlie Brown Special* on the last Sunday Evening Advent Service on December 23rd. Everyone did a fabulous job and made both services a hit! We had a lot of help from Carol Rossbach for the craft and from Zion's Chancel Guild for dinner on December 2nd. And when it came to December 23rd, we really appreciated the dedication of our youth and their families, especially since it was so late in the busy holiday season. A big **thank you** also goes out to Brian & Lisa Kay, Doug & Lisa Roman, along with Mark Votaw for heading up and leading the Youth Advent Dinner. The meal was delicious and enjoyed by all. Also, **thank you** to all of the youth and their families who contributed food and helped to serve the meal.

THANK YOU FROM OUR YOUTH: TWO NEW TREES FOR ZION!

As a gift to the congregation, the Youth of Zion have purchased and will plant two new trees. You have seen these two beautiful *Blue Spruce Pines* in the Luther Hall entrance. It won't be long before these trees are planted in the ground to add to the beauty of our church property.

ml:namespace prefix = v ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:vml" />ml:namespace prefix = w ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:word" />

Zion's Sunday School Staff would like to wish all of our families a Peaceful and Happy New Year!

THE WOMEN OF ZION

Thankoffering Sunday in November provided a very nice follow-up to Blanket Sunday in October. With Blanket Sunday, the Women of Zion filled 43 boxes with 601 pounds of blankets, quilts and comforters, along with 78 school kits and 45 health kits, and sent them off to Lutheran World Relief. With Thank-offering Sunday, the Women of Zion sent \$624 to ELCA headquarters to help with the ministries of the Women of the ELCA. We thank the women for their generosity, and the congregation for your generous support.

The Chancel Guild's Christmas Dinner on Tuesday, December 11, continued of theme of exceptional food for Zion's members, which began at St. Paul's on Sunday with a wonderful beginning to our ecumenical evening with our Roman Catholic partners and continued on through Wednesday (and then Sunday again) with the Men of Zion. The food, the fellowship, the service, and the great company made for a delightful evening celebrating the service that is offered week in and week out through our Chancel Guild. Our thanks for the extra service that is required with additional communion services during the holiday season, along with their responsi-bility of caring for so many poinsettias.

All women are invited to join us for our *monthly Bible study*, which meets in Luther Hall on the third Tuesday, which this month is January 15th, at 9:30 a.m. January's study turns to *Table Manners*, focusing on the Last Supper, and then on fish fry by the seashore following the Resurrection. We will look more closely at how eating and drinking with Jesus helps us to imagine (and to participate in) the feast that is yet to come, that great heavenly banquet called to celebrate the Good News that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

THE MEN OF ZION, TOO

The Second Annual Christmas Prime Rib Dinner, with our Singing Chef doing the honors of serving up thus sumptuous feast on the evening of Wednesday, December 12th, was a huge success! The food was out-of-this-world delicious, and the crowd was simply outstanding. More than forty of us were on hand to enjoy a wonderful evening. We took a moment during the evening to surprise Dale Jacobs with his own *Singing Chef* smock. It was a great surprise, and nicely embroidered by Linda

Lancashire. We would like to thank everyone who enjoyed the evening, since through your presence we were able to raise a little more money for the Pastor's Discretionary Fund.

The Men of Zion hosted the Sunday Evening Advent Dinner on December 16, and despite the horrible weather that blew North Canton's way in the afternoon and evening, members and friends came from far and near to enjoy a truly memorable evening of great food and inspiring worship. The menu featured honey-baked ham and macaroni-and-cheese. Our worship service featured Zion's Praise Team, the Children's Choir, Shirley Horton on viola, and the Men of Zion in full voice. It's hard to know who was in greater need of a reality check, the worship leaders who didn't cancel the evening due to horrible weather, or the worshipers who braved the elements to attend! In either case, we are thankful to God and to you for a memorable evening.

The Men of Zion began the year with their monthly meeting on Wednesday, January 2, although a good number of us were still recovering from the arrival of the new year. Those of us who were present offered our thanks to God for two great fundraising dinners in December, and dedicated a total of \$173.01 to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund.

ODDS 'N ENDS AT ZION

Lutheran Engaged Encounter: A wedding is a day; your marriage, a lifetime! Engagement and preparations for a wedding can be an exciting but stressful time for any relationship. *Lutheran Engaged Encounter* provides an opportunity for couples (engaged or seriously dating) to openly and honestly share hopes, dreams and desires for the marriage relationship that may lie ahead. The next Engaged Encounter is February 15—17 in Richfield, Ohio. Please contact Doug & Lori Burchard with your interest at by emailing them at: lburchar@kent.edu (If you would like to talk with one of Zion's members first, contact Bob & Linda Lancashire at lanc2@neo.rr.com)

Our own 2008 Bible Bowl: There will not be a Synod Bible Bowl this year, but Team Zion will not let that stop us! We are currently tossing around some ideas for organizing our own Bible Bowl this year! We are hoping to plan this event for early March. There is talk of our youth team challenging an adult team this year, or maybe another church will join us! We will let everyone know as soon as all the details are ironed out, and we choose which book of the Bible we will study! Whatever the outcome, it will be a great event, full of learning and fellowship, with our new and improved twist this year.

Saturday Worship moves to Sunday: Since Epiphany leads so quickly into Lent this year, arriving with Ash Wednesday on February 6, we are sticking with the Sunday Evening Worship Service through to the celebration of Easter on March 23. Worship will begin at 5:30 p.m. Holy Communion will be offered. Once Lent arrives, the format will return to what has become our traditional Sunday Evening Lenten schedule, with dinner set to begin at 5:30 p.m., and worship at 6:15 p.m.

THANK YOU'S AND MORE

Pastor Sherwindt and Members of Zion,

I just wanted to thank you for the wonderful basket of books and the CD for Emma. We will definitely be doing a lot of reading! Thank you for thinking of us!

*Sincerely,
Lynn, Mike, Michal
& Emma Jean Todich*

Pastor Sherwindt and Members of Zion,

Thank you for attending the calling hours for our father and grandfather, Paul Klotz. Your thoughtfulness and support greatly helped out our family during this difficult time.

Thank you to our Zion family for the condo-lences. Your love and support means so much to us all. May God's blessings be yours for the special way you have expressed His love.

*Thank you so much,
Miriam, Ron, Ronda,
& Marissa Keating*

—

Martin Luther King, Jr., born on January 15, 1929, will be remembered on January 21. His was a witness inspired by the life of our Lord Jesus. Here is one of his many memorable quotes: "Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illumines it." Amen

THOUGHTFUL AND THANKFUL WORDS FROM THE FOOD PANTRY

Hunger happens all year. It just does not miraculously only happen during the holidays. I become a little irate when the *Canton Repository* features churches giving away Thanksgiving meals on Thanksgiving Day. I want to write to the churches and the *Repository*, and yell, "***What about the other 11 months!***"

As I drove to our Thanksgiving meal this year, I became aware of just how many vehicles there are in some people's driveways, with all the house lights on, highlighting the hurried activity inside. My warm and fuzzy feeling ended abruptly when my thoughts drifted to three little boys. Two weeks ago, I received a call from a teacher in the Plain Local School District. She told me about three of her "babies" – as she often refers to her students – who went without dinner the night before and without breakfast that day. They were very unkempt and wore the same clothes from the day before. They had moved in with their Aunt and her children, because their Momma had been arrested. The Aunt could barely feed her own children, let alone trying to care for three more mouths.

Zion's Food Pantry jumped into action and gave eight grocery bags full of food to their case worker, who then delivered it to the Aunt's house. Through no fault of their own these children had been

placed in a position where no child should ever be, where they have to worry about their next meal. How is a child to ever learn in school if they do not have the proper nutrition? In Canton there is a backpack program where food is sent home on Fridays so that the students will have something to eat during their time away from school. That's a program every community should have.

What a sad thought, that these children right here in our community have to deal with such difficult circumstances. We don't have to go overseas to find hunger. It's right here in Stark County. Our starvation here in America may not be caused by drought, but it is here, often due to an individual's poor choices, leaving others vulnerable and in need.

Well, thank God for Zion's Food Pantry. All of the Food Pantry Crew thanks you for your generous support, especially for our *Seventh Annual Turkey Giveaway*. Without your support for our Food Pantry & Clothing Closet we could not continue feeding folks who in many ways are just like you and me. In addition to the turkeys that were dropped off here at the church, donations totaling in excess of \$900 helped us to purchase everything we needed for our Food Pantry families and the Siffrin Group Homes. There are so many people to thank for the good that we do – the regulars on Tuesdays, the Sunday School, the Youth of Zion, our community churches here in North Canton, for the food they donate, and for the money they give.

AWESOME is the perfect word to describe the Food Pantry Crew. All of us work together toward the goal of feeding the hungry, without hesitation of effort or judgment of others.

Bless all of you,
Shirley Cavender